

Eben Burnham-Snyder, Rep. Markey, 202-225-4012, Eben.BS@mail.house.gov
Maria Reppas, Rep. McCollum, 202-225-6631, Maria.Reppas@mail.house.gov

Emilie Surrusco, Alaska Wilderness League, 202-544-5205, emilie@alaskawild.org
Kristina Johnson, Sierra Club, 415-977-5619, Kristina.Johnson@sierraclub.org
Neil Shader, The Wilderness Society, 202-429-3941 neil_shader@twc.org

Congressional champions, conservationists and Alaska Natives celebrate 50th anniversary of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Washington, D.C. - Today, congressional champions, Gwich'in Nation representatives and conservation groups joined together in front of the U.S. Capitol to honor the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, our nation's greatest wilderness icon, while calling for its lasting protection. **Rep . Ed Markey (D-MA)**

along with

Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA), Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA), Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)

and

Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)

, honored the Arctic Refuge and its roles in our natural heritage while sharing their connections to the Arctic Refuge and its Coastal Plain. Representatives from the Gwich'in Nation, who call the Arctic Refuge "the sacred place where life begins," and national conservation groups, joined the members of Congress to celebrate the Arctic Refuge's 50

th

anniversary and to echo the call for lasting protections. Photos from the event are available.

Quotes from Speakers:

"If we don't enact strong protections like monument status, oil companies and their allies in Congress will continue to push for the monumentally short-sighted plan to drill one of our last

pristine wild places. Now is the time to create a refuge for the American people from hundreds of billions of dollars we spend every year on foreign oil. Now is the time to create a refuge from the fossil fuel policies that have devastated the economy of the Gulf. Now is the time to protect the Refuge."

- *Representative Edward Markey (D-MA)*

"Now is the perfect moment to grant this irreplaceable landscape the permanent protection it has always deserved. As things stand, the Refuge can be opened to oil drilling any time Congress says so, and we all know this unique piece of our country deserves more than that. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not just home to one of the greatest animal migrations on Earth, and is not just sacred to the Gwich'in Nation - it stands as a special part of America's frontier legacy. We need to consider the profound debt we owe to posterity before we make any decisions we'd regret, and drilling for oil in this beautiful landscape ranks very near the top of that list. That's why the president should recognize the Refuge's special place in American and natural history and name it a national monument without delay."

- *Representative Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ)*

"We Minnesotans hold a special place in our hearts for the Arctic. In 2001, I had the wonderful opportunity to marvel at the beauty of this unique wilderness up close. On this 50th anniversary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, we must redouble our efforts to permanently protect this precious area. The tragedy of the BP oil spill in the Gulf demonstrates why no drilling should ever take place in this fragile ecosystem. We must be committed to a clean energy future that allows our children and future generations to continue enjoying this national treasure."

- *Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN)*

"We stand here today to recognize those who have successfully defended the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for the last 50 years. They have fought hard to keep this national treasure pristine and wild. But it is not safe. As long as our addiction to oil continues, it will remain a target for those who want to spoil it for a small petroleum fix. However, I am confident that American innovation will break our oil addiction by developing new, clean sources of energy, and provide lasting protection for this place."

- *Representative Jay Inslee (D-WA)*

"I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to visit the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and see first-hand the beauty of this national treasure. In honor of its 50th anniversary, it is my hope that President Obama will take action to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge from the relentless attacks of Big Oil to open it up to drilling and put this delicate ecosystem at risk,"

- *Representative Lois Capps (D-CA)*

"The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a sacred land which must be protected. It's health is directly tied to the health of those who depend on it every day like the Gwich'in. We must protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from those who would sacrifice it for an archaic and greedy energy policy."

- *Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)*

"The caribou are not just what we eat, but who we are. They are in our dances, stories, songs and the whole way we see the world. Caribou are how we get from one year to the other."

- *Sarah James, Gwich'in Steering Committee*

"There are some places in this country that define what it means to be American; the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of those places. Fifty years ago, our parents' and grandparents' generation looked out across this vast wilderness and decided to set it aside as a protected space for the abundant wildlife that depends on it. Now is the time for us to ensure that this American icon can be celebrated for the next 50 years and beyond, by giving it the strongest protections possible."

- *Tom Campion, Board Chair, Alaska Wilderness League*

"In the decades since Alaska's Arctic Refuge was created, its wildlife have narrowly escaped the oil industry's relentless efforts to drill. Now is our chance to keep the oil industry from destroying the Refuge forever."

- *Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club*

"The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is under constant threat from oil and gas development,"
"The Gwich'in people have kept this land unspoiled for generations - and along with champions like Chairman Markey and Senators Mark and Tom Udall, we've been able to protect this pristine area for 50 years. But as a nation, if we cannot protect this spectacular place from drilling, what can we protect? All of this sanctuary should be designated as wilderness before it is too late."

- *William H. Meadows, President, The Wilderness Society*